

From: root@cycling.stures.iastate.edu@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/11/02 6:32am
Subject: Please listen to the public

I am going to try and keep this as short as I can, it may be hard because this is a issue that I am very passionate about.

I am a computer science student at Iowa State University, I have developed software for many years now on a variety of platforms including, Windows and many different types of Unix and Linux operating systems. I have also had the pleasure of maintaining these systems. My knowledge and experience is nothing special, I am just like hundreds of thousands of people that work on keeping our systems as secure as we can.

I could write you many pages about problems with the current state of the computer industry and how that relates to the Microsoft Corporation. But I am not going to do that. I am going to tell you about some of the issues that I think are prevalent to not only system administrators but to every computer user.

With the increasing amount of sensitive information that is on computers today security is a major issue. Some people, including some of my closest friends, are unable to see this. This is probably one of the biggest problems that we face as a computer dependent society. They are uneducated about the risks they take every time they use a computer. Most people would probably just try and say that I am paranoid, however the truth is that my education and experiences is what makes me look paranoid but the risks I talk about are real.

So what does this have to do with Microsoft. The answer to that question is very long, there are more security holes in Microsoft's software than I can keep track of, which is why I will only focus on those that affect the most users.

I know of these holes not because I am a hacker of any kind but because I have to fix them in order to maintain the least bit of security.

This nation spends millions of dollars every year on Microsoft's software, to then turn around and spend millions more to fix the damage incurred because of a virus that it spread. Everyone is familiar with email viruses, most people have received one and have been infected by it, if they haven't just keep using Outlook and wait a while. This method of putting viruses in emails costs this nation more every year than anyone wants to think about. I don't know the numbers and I don't think anyone truly does know them, because fixing the problem costs a lot of time and money but so does trying to prevent the problem.

In how many other industries can a company get away with selling a product that puts the buyer in danger without informing them about it. When you purchase Microsoft software do they tell you about all the security holes in it and how what damage they can do? Of course they can't predict what tools a hacker will use but once a problem is found a solution needs to be found. This is something that Microsoft is not very diligent at doing. But who can blame them for not wanting to

publish this information, after all if they did how many people do you think would spend \$300 for the upgrade version of their next software, which fixed some problems but made just as many new ones. Well I will tell you who can blame them, everyone, starting with yourself. If I had a car and the manufacturer knew that it could explode if someone kicked and they didn't tell me about it, they would be sued to no end. Many people say that this comparison is outrageous, but it is not, this is just how unsafe their software is. The reason people believe this is because that is what Microsoft wants you to believe and what they sell you in every ad that they have. Really, a company that big can sell the general public anything it wants.

But now for some proof.

The computer industry has its ways of making standards just like every other industry. Most of the time those standards are set by a non-profit organization, like IEEE. But because Microsoft is so huge and controls most of the market they don't feel like they have to follow the rules. Right now they can create whatever standard they want and because they sell so many systems it becomes a standard. But the problem is that there is nothing standard about it. Standards are published and available to the public, something that Microsoft also does not do. Take the HTML standard, or HyperText Markup Language. Their browser, Internet Explorer has its own standards that it follows, sure it follows all of the real standards but it has included other things that are not standard, I do not know what they are because they will not tell me. But what I do know is that the computer I am currently sitting at right now has a problem with it. I am using a Silicon Graphics Indigo 2 R10000 machine running a version of Unix and using Netscape Navigator as my browser. When trying to view pages on Microsoft's own web site it will not display the content. But when I go to my Windows machine it does not have a problem at all. But the problem is not me, the problem is the site, I am convinced that it will not display the content when using Netscape.

Microsoft will call this a coincidence or a problem with Netscape, but the problem is with Microsoft and that they have enough power to make it the truth!

This is a situation that needs to stop and this is the time to do it.

We have an opportunity here to stop something that should have been stopped long ago. I don't care what Microsoft says is best for our nation. It boils down to what is best for Microsoft, if you think they care about what is best for this nation you should consider yourself one of their victims. A company does not get as large as they are by caring about anyone but themselves.

Freedom of information is a wonderful thing, and that is what makes the internet one of the most powerful tools today. I should not have to remind you of what freedom is, but I will say this, the longer Microsoft pushes on its current path the less free the internet will become. A judge would say that is speculation but I don't care, I want it to me motivation, motivation to do the right thing and just think about where

we will be in ten years. Microsoft will never own the internet, at least I hope not, but if we are not careful they will control it. Think of it as a kind of conspiracy, the amount of information you have is almost nothing when you know the truth. I can not prove that is the case here but there are millions of us out here that can feel it.

I thank you very much for your time, I did not accomplish my goal of a short letter and if you have made it this far I know that you will do the right thing and put an end to this situation and open up a new and better door to the future.

I leave you with this. Microsoft is huge but programmers around the world is much bigger. The progress of open source software has grown so much in the last few years and I believe me that it is just the tip of the iceberg. The future of computing lies in our hands and not Microsoft, but if we are not careful that can change.

Thanks again,

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